

THE SONG OF THE WAVE



GEORGE
CABOT
LODGE



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THE SONG OF THE WAVE

AND OTHER POEMS

THE SONG OF THE WAVE

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

GEORGE CABOT LODGE

*"Mais nous, nous, consumés d'une impossible envie,
En proie au mal de croire et d'aimer sans retour,
Répondez, jours nouveaux nous rendrez-vous la vie?
Dites, ô jours anciens, nous rendrez-vous l'amour?"*

—LECONTE DE LISLE

NEW YORK

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TO THE POET

GIACOMO LEOPARDI

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
EXORDIUM	I
A FIRST WORD	2
THE OCEAN SINGS	4
THE SONG OF THE WAVE	7
THE EAST WIND	11
THE NORSEMEN	13
" WAS HAT MAN DIR, DU ARMES KIND, GETHAN " .	17
THE SONG OF THE SWORD	
PRELUDE	18
INVOCATION	21
THE SONG	22
AFTER-WORD	25
BALLAD	30
DAWN	33

CONTENTS

	PAGE
SUNSET	35
THE GATES OF LIFE	36
MOTHERS OF MEN	44
LOVE IN AGE	47
A MEMORY	51
AGE	53
EVENING	56
TO A WOMAN	57
THE END	59
NÉANT	62
YOUTH	64
SERENADE	65
SONG	66
SONG	68
“ OR POSERAI PER SEMPRE, STANCO MIO COR ”	70
THEY	72
TO A BUST OF THE MATER DOLOROSA	75

CONTENTS

	PAGE
TO PSYCHE	77
THE WILL	80
TUCKANUCK	
1. SONNET	83
2. SONNET	84
3. STANZAS	85
4. WIND OF TWILIGHT	87
PASTORAL	88
FALL	90

SONNETS

I. TO SILENCE	95
II. TO THE EARTH	96
III. ESSEX.—I	97
IV. ESSEX.—2	98
V. SONNET	99
VI. FOG AT SEA	100
VII. NIRVANA.—I	101

CONTENTS

	PAGE
VIII. NIRVANA.—2	102
IX. PASSING DAYS	103
X. ON AN ÆOLIAN HARP	104
XI. THE SPHINX	105
XII. SONNET	106
XIII. TO THE MEMORY OF W. H. P.	107
XIV. INSOMNIA	108
XV. SONNET	109
XVI. SONNET	110
XVII. THE GATE OF DREAMS	111
XVIII. TO GIACOMO LEOPARDI	112
XIX. TO J. T. S.—(AFTER READING “AMIS ET AMILE”)	113
XX. TO THE CHILDREN OF THE MUSE	114
XXI. L'ENFANT DU SIÈCLE	115
XXII. AUX MODERNES.—1	116
XXIII. AUX MODERNES.—2	117
XXIV. SONNET	118

CONTENTS

	PAGE
XXV. TO A STATUE	119
XXVI. A DREAM	120
XXVII. "ELI! ELI! LAMA SABACTHANI!" .	121
XXVIII. DANTE	122
XXIX. LOVE.—1	123
XXX. LOVE.--2	124
XXXI. SONNET	125
XXXII. SONNET	126
XXXIII. SONNET	127
XXXIV. SONNET	128
XXXV. SONNET	129
XXXVI. SONNET WITHOUT RHYMES . . .	130
XXXVII. TOO SOON	131
XXXVIII. TOO LATE	132
XXXIX. THE NIGHT-WIND	133
XL. SONNET	134
A LAST WORD	135

EXORDIUM

SPEAK ! said my soul, be stern and adequate ;
The sunset falls from Heaven, the year is late,
Love waits with fallen tresses at thy gate

And mourns for perished days.

Speak ! in the rigor of thy fate and mine,
Ere these scant, dying days, bright-lipped with wine,
All one by one depart, resigned, divine,
Through desert, autumn ways.

Speak ! thou art lonely in thy chilly mind,
With all this desperate solitude of wind,
The solitude of tears that make thee blind,

Of wild and causeless tears.

Speak ! thou hast need of me, heart, hand and head,
Speak, if it be an echo of thy dread,
A dirge of hope, of young illusions dead—
Perchance God hears !

A FIRST WORD

“COME,” said the Ocean, “I have songs to sing,
And need thine utterance, as Apollo’s self
Needed his lyre to perfume the world
With chants of soul and body, both divine.”

“Come,” said the Ocean, “if thy soul is fit
To bear my mastery, thy words shall flow
Simple and adequate as human tears,
And all thy discord fall in great accords.”

“Come,” said the Ocean: and I answered: “Lord
Of song and silence, I have heard thy voice,
And loved as may a man the heart divine;
But still my soul is tremulous and mute.”

A FIRST WORD

“Come,” said the Ocean, “Oh, my tired child.

My lips are delicate with whisper, sad

With endless yesterdays, and marvellous

With myriad legends since the birth of Time.”

“Come,” said the Ocean, soft ; and I, “Beloved,

Alone upon thy breast I heard and knew

And marvelled and was dumb.” And then the sea :

“Speak !” And I said, “By what ?” and She, “By
Love.”

THE OCEAN SINGS

I HAVE glorified God in my descant,
I have praised him in tempest and calm,
I have mirrored his proper refulgence
As I slept in the infinite palm.

I have sung till the night was ecstatic,
Till my lyrics woke flame in the moon,
I have sung to the morning's desire
And sheathed in the metal of noon.

When my forehead was furrowed with silver,
When my bosom swelled softly as sleep,
When I wounded the sands in my passion,
When I lisped through the sea-weed at neap,

THE OCEAN SINGS

Through the piteous wail of the siren,
Through the bell-buoy's comfortless moan,
Through the silence that stirs to a sea-bird
That moves in my vastness alone,

I have sung ; through the ranges of music
I have frightened and comforted man,
I have praised the strong life that compels me
As what voice in the universe can.

I have sung the great lyric of sorrow,
The splendour of life and the pain,
I have pitied the spirit's endeavour,
The doubt and despair in the brain.

My passion is never senescent,
My sorrow is balm to the soul,
My voice is divine with remembrance,
With peace and commiserate dole.

THE OCEAN SINGS

I have lavished my largess of comfort,
 Taken earth in mine arms like a child,
Taught the children of life of its splendour,
 Brought their eyes to the light unbeguild.

I have laboured and none shall reward me,
 I have lavished and none shall repay,
If the earth that I serve be ungrateful
 My bounty shall never decay.

Could the stars be repaid for their brilliance,
 They would fall through precipitous air
Day and night from the summit of heaven,
 Leave the universe blackened and bare.

Take my beauty—God's image is mirrored,
 Take my pity for Fate's sure control,
Take my song, it is Life's evanescence,
 Take my silence, the strength of the Soul!

THE SONG OF THE WAVE

I

This is the song of the wave ! The mighty one !
Child of the soul of silence, beating the air to sound :
White as a live terror, as a drawn sword,

This is the wave.

II

This is the song of the wave, the white-maned steed of the
Tempest
Whose veins are swollen with life,
In whose flanks abide the four winds.

This is the wave.

III

This is the song of the wave ! The dawn leaped out of the
sea
And the waters lay smooth as a silver shield,

THE SONG OF THE WAVE

And the sun-rays smote on the waters like a golden sword.

Then a wind blew out of the morning

And the waters rustled

And the wave was born!

IV

This is the song of the wave! The wind blew out of the
noon,

And the white sea-birds like driven foam

Winged in from the ocean that lay beyond the sky

And the face of the waters was barred with white,

For the wave had many brothers,

And the wave was strong!

V

This is the song of the wave! The wind blew out of the
sunset

And the west was lurid as Hell.

The black clouds closed like a tomb, for the sun was dead.

THE SONG OF THE WAVE

Then the wind smote full as the breath of God,
And the wave called to its brothers,
“This is the crest of life !”

VI

This is the song of the wave, that rises to fall,
Rises a sheer green wall like a barrier of glass
That has caught the soul of the moonlight,
Caught and prisoned the moon-beams ;
Its edge is frittered to foam.
This is the wave !

VII

This is the song of the wave, of the wave that falls—
Wild as a burst of day-gold blown through the colours of
morning
It shivers to infinite atoms up the rumbling steep of sand.
This is the wave.

THE SONG OF THE WAVE

VIII

This is the song of the wave, that died in the fulness of
life.

The prodigal this, that lavished its largess of strength

In the lust of attainment.

Aiming at things for Heaven too high,

Sure in the pride of life, in the richness of strength.

So tried it the impossible height, till the end was found :

Where ends the soul that yearns for the fillet of morning
stars,

The soul in the toils of the journeying worlds,

Whose eye is filled with the Image of God,

And the end is Death !

THE EAST WIND

It came !

Breaking across the giant gates of gold
It cleaved the veils of morning fold on fold,
A fluent sword aslant the early flame.

The sea

Shivered, as waking from impassioned sleep
A naked girl might feel her senses creep
Beneath the winter of reality.

The dawn

Fell haggard and dishevelled from the skies,
The shoreless ocean filled with whispered cries
And through the smothered twilight reared its spawn.

THE EAST WIND

And now

A splash of chilly wind forsook the air
And caught the ocean by its tangled hair,
Bent it, and bit the stigma in its brow.

Alone

The wind of ruin walked from sky to sky—
As when Sertorius put forth to die,
It swayed the void beyond the gates of stone.

And then

It grew almighty and the ocean roared ;
The living slime wherewith the world is flooded
Hearkened, as in their ships despairing men.

To me

The whisper came, the voice and then the call
Of wanton power, and then, o'erwhelming all,
The passion of mine own infinity.

THE NORSEMEN

THESE are the men !

The North has given them name,
The children of God who dare,
From the field and the growing tree,
Come down through the crystalline air
Where the sky is a fleece of flame,
And the breaker's crest is as hair
Blown back from the brows of the sea ;
These are the men !

These are the men !

Where midnight abides in the land,
Where the sun walks round the earth,
Where the fields of God are benumbed,
There the shadow did give them birth,

THE NORSEMEN

Where the waves are tawny with sand
And the miserly ground breeds dearth
And the harps of the air are thrummed,
These are the men !

These are the men !
Oh Merciful what for them ?
For thy children with frozen lips ?
Then the Lord spake, " I am the Life ;
Go down to the sea in ships
Belovèd and dwell in the hem
Of my robe though the tempest rips
Like a sword, for I give ye Strife ! "
These are the men !

These are the men !
For they stand in the dawn of things
Full-armed from the ocean's womb ;
With their dower of wild great joy
In the pouring sun, in the boom

THE NORSEMEN

Of the wave as the storm-flail sings,
Till the waters pulse and ploy
And gape like a snow-fringed tomb ;
These are the men !

These are the men !
In the strength of the primal song
As the increate world turned white
They descended and dwelt with the sea,
Like a flower dawn bloomed on the night,
And they knew that their lives were strong,
That life was and should ever be—
Then the sun !—and a pulse of light—
These are the men !

These are the men !
In their youth without memory
They were glad, for they might not see
The lies that the world has wrought
On this parchment of God. The tree

THE NORSEMEN

Yielded them ships and the sky
Flamed as the waters fought ;
But they knew that death was a lie,
That the life of man was as nought,
And they dwelt in the truth of the sea :
These are the mén !

“WAS HAT MAN DIR, DU ARMES KIND,
GETHAN?”

WEEP nevermore again !

The wind's wild footstep thrills the leaves with pain ;

Then desert silence, then the scattered cries

Of frail-voiced children, then within thy heart

A sense of falling leaves through gray linked rain,

Of perished youth with grave prophetic eyes

And strange scant visions of a hopeless past ;

A sense of life no older than thou art,

And in thy soul, of bright tears falling fast—

Hush! tired child, weep nevermore again.

THE SONG OF THE SWORD

PRELUDE

IN the ineffable days when from the summits of morning,
Through the extravagant noon, down to the murmurous
eve,

Lands of the plenteous vine lay in their vernal adorning,
Robed in immutable calm, God's everlasting reprieve.

Lands of imperial sun, lands of enduring fruition,
Lands where abundant the wine perfumed the madness
of youth,

Lands where the women and men flamed in the vernal ignition,
Gained through the shadows of sense rays from the ultimate truth.

THE SONG OF THE SWORD

Where on the tenanted seas flashed the flushed feet of the
moon-rise

And stirred the dumb heart with its touch—silent, alone,
unconfined ;

Where, as to promiseful dawn, scattered the natural tune dies,
Women's bare feet in the dew, women's wild hair in
the wind.

Where—O immaculate dream—Hope that endureth for-
ever,

Beauty and adequate peace opened wide gates for the soul,
Where the low lyric of love welded so nought could dis-
sever,

Where there was marble and song, where death was
divine and its dole.

There in impossible times, lands of the amorous turtle,
Still, on a porphyry shrine lay the memorial sword,
Sheathed in reverberate gold, consecrate laurel and myrtle,
Cold in the plenty and peace, waiting the hand of the
Lord.

THE SONG OF THE SWORD

Passionate, passive and proud, stark on the porphyry altar,
Menacing, waiting the years, serving an absolute need,
Ever the sword is at hand, lest, when the hearts of men
falter,

Rise from the satiate peace sons of degenerate seed.

So there may come to the need, filled with enormous desire,
sire,

One from the mire of men bearing the resonant word,
Then shall the slumber dissolve, shattered as crystal by
fire,

He alone voids the gold sheath, chaunting the song of
the sword.

Then shall the spirits of men wake to a novel refulgence,
Over the marginal sea break an irradiate star,
Flame shall arise in the heart, desire demanding indulgence,

Lust of the greatness of earth, lust of dominion and war.

INVOCATION

God of the hand and loin and burning heart,
God of the whelming ecstasy and lust,
God of the fretful youth and lifeless dust,
God that art travailed with a vital smart !

God of the earlier races, limbed like Mars,
Epic as Odin echoing bell-voiced forth,
God of the sun-gilt South and iron North,
Symbol of life's impulsion—God of Wars !

Thine, in thy powerful hand, before mankind
Sprang from the womb of nature, blazed the sword,
Forged in the vital heat creation poured,
White from its core and tempered in the wind,

That walked through chaos down the cold expanse
Of lucent solitude from sun to sun !
O sign of life when life was unbegun,
This life of earth where death is circumstance !

THE SONG

WHEN the vortex of Heaven was blind

The sword

Was framed from a primal desire

That shook thro' the void like a wind ;

Then it rose as a shivering fire

And crimsoned God's vision of peace ;

Then sank, like the trail of a star,

Down the frail twilight of space

And stood over hell like a scar

Furrowed deep in the forehead of night,

Till the universe called, " There is light,

And life and the promise of war."

Lamping the limitless gloom,

The sword

Glowed in the saffron of Hell,

As might in a tenanted tomb

THE SONG

Some strenuous memory swell
Over death and illumine the dead eyes.
Then—O wonder !—ere ever it fell,
A hand gat the sword in its grasp,
And while earth and sea uttered their spawn,
Far-flung on the ocean of skies,
It lay like the welter of dawn
In the giant immutable clasp.

Then white as the darkness of death

The sword

Sang like a boreal breath
Blown thro' the idyll of dawn,
Cadenced as steel that is drawn
Tense thro' the crest of a storm,
It exalted the choir of earth,
Singing deep where the heart-blood is warm,
And pervaded the resonant sky
Like the solemn and sorrowful mirth
Of life that is living to die.

THE SONG

And down thro' the legended years
 The sword,
Sonorous with laughter and tears,
Has sung its old epic to man ;
And the earlier glory awakes
As when life in its anguish began,
Till, whenever the noon-brilliance shakes
Down the scabbardless steel, joy and woe,
All is blended to passion that has
Neither laughter, nor weeping, nor name,
But love and the lusting for fame,
Even death in its agony, grow
Into life that is, shall be and was—
Life the ichor of earth, the spring-throe,
Ever manifold, ever the same.

AFTER-WORD

Is it this, Belovèd, this the secret?—
Life, the earth life, thee and me compelling,
Life and only life?—Where flowers have withered,
Lavished perfume on the impartial breezes,
Fed the bee and crowned the bush with beauty,
Then, the summer spent, the petals perish,
Then, the spring returned, the sap returning,
Novel buds that ripen to perfection,—
Flowers may fade but never so the impulse,
Shift the scenes the play goes on forever?—
Is it this, Belovèd, this the secret?

Oh, consider!—Sure that life endureth—
Do I kiss thy lips, thine adolescent
Breast of marble, do my fingers even

AFTER-WORD

Touch thy hand, the perfume of thy tresses
Fall upon my sense, thy voice's cadence
Turn concordant all my soul's confusion—
Do I these, or look upon thee even,
Comes a certainty of life's persistence,
Life that speaks in thee, in me, in nature,
Life demanding choate form and substance,
Life pervasive, deathless and enduring.

Is it this, Belovèd, this the secret ?
This I sing to, since the word suffices,
This thou hearest ?—I strove to sing the man's song,
Sing the earth's song, Life, the strength and splendour !
Thou did'st lean and hark and comprehend me :—
Life abideth, thou must know—a lover !—
Thou did'st know and then, and then—I, pausing,
Hear you question, “ Is it this, the secret ? ”
Hear you ask, “ Is life the spirits answer ?
Shall the inward voice be stilled in living ? ”
Hear you wonder, “ What's the good of life, then ?

AFTER-WORD

Why endure the pain and natural anguish,
Wherefore draw the furrow, sweat the year-long,
When the winter shuts its jaws of crystal,
Kills the generous spring, refuses fruitage—
This the secret? What's the good of life then?"

Ah, there's still a song—men strive to sing it,
Sing their striving, reach their goal, are silent.
What's the song?—No utterance can confine it
Only silence great enough to bear it.
I who cannot praise thee, thee my woman,
Singing life, as dim as life my verses,
Could I call the winds and waves to witness,
Could I pull the stars down from their courses,
Were I lion-voiced as old Jehovah,
Then my words could be but shadowy symbols;
None may phrase the spirit's simple knowledge,
And the secret and the revelation
Of what is not, where the mind of mortal
Turns to ashes and where life is tacit.

AFTER-WORD

Oh, my Well-Beloved forget the pæan !
Let the sword-blade and the gold and glory
Warp no longer thine eternal vision.
Seek thy soul, and, finding, cease from struggle ;
Cease, forget the song of life and living ;
That's the world's way—Life and more and endless,
Copious earth-life in its rich completion,
Life and death and after, Life eternal,
Sapphire pavements and the domes of opal,
Life of blended music fair and fancied :
Only life—what life might be—a vision !

Then the Soul's way : lapse from sound to silence,
Merge oblivious in entire ceasing
In thy nativeness, the matrix ocean,
Thou a spray-drop hung on slippery verges ;
Ah ! the world's way—thine to be no longer ;
Thine the soul's way, thou hast seen and known it !
Like an empty tale the worlds shall vanish,
Frail as dream, and life be quite forgotten.

AFTER-WORD

What of life-songs then, and what of death-songs?
Sound and fury down the babbling ages,
They shall cease, the echoes pass and perish;
On the void the 'stablishment eternal
Bides alone—the Soul's gigantic silence.

BALLAD

SHE died and lay in her grave of stone,
Alone in her shroud with open eyes,
And an angel came from the awful throne
To lead her soul through the seven skies.

He stood at her coffin in solemn mirth
And called her spirit to leave its sleep,
But her soul replied from the frozen earth,
“It is not for God that I wait and weep!”

He sought her hand in her silver shroud
But her soul looked out from her sunken eyes,
And the angel turned with his forehead bowed
And rose alone through the seven skies.

BALLAD

And she lay alone in her hearse of stone
And her spirit watched like a sleepless flame,
And her lover arose from a dream of moan
And came to her tomb and spake her name.

He whispered, "I come from the world of sin ;
My heart desires, my soul is proud ;
Shall I open thy coffin and come within,
Or lead thee forth in thy silver shroud ? "

And the Lady rose in her awful pride,
For her soul was strong with the wine of Love,
And she said, "I have waited to be thy bride,
Though God desired me there above."

And he whispered, "Love, I have come and found !
I have died with thee, for my life was thine,
And our bridal bed is the frozen ground,—
If heaven is lost thou art wholly mine.

BALLAD

“The love of our lives can bear the frown
Of God Himself, though our lives are gone.”
And he drew her close while they laid them down
Lip to lip in the tomb of stone.

DAWN

THE swoon of night's delicate whisper, the tense wide still-
ness of birth,

The holy awaiting of sound in the soul of the slumberous
earth,

The peace compelling our tears for the shame of the agon-
ized flesh,

Ere creation has riven its grave-clothes and come on the
world afresh.

The dawn that doth come like a song aflame on the lips
of the world,

The grasses' hymn to the dew, and the resonant wave that
is hurled

From the reticent soul of the waters, and about the death-
bed of night

Resurrection pulsating like music, and the heavens enor-
mous with light.

DAWN

Dear God ! how the pulses beat faster, as, lo ! with the
rush of a wind,
From the labyrinth caves of our slumber we feel we have
brought forth a mind ;
And the shock as the shock of battle, when our vision
rends the veil
As the sun swims in blood on the waters ;—'tis the Life of
our life doth prevail !

The exquisite fabric of morning, too pure for the spoken
word,
From the cedar-tree woven with twilight has uttered the
song of a bird,
'Tis the wild, pure pæan of pity, ever new since the world
began,
'Tis the sadness fragrant with promise—a day that is given
to Man !

SUNSET

THE sea a great vague mistiness of blue,
A thread of murmur drawn about the shore,
The journeying of wind across the moor
Even and slow and delicate with dew.
The peace of ancient sorrow come anew,
The resignation of a great despair
And failing of all struggle into prayer ;—
The promise of a day is proved untrue.
The choired sweetness of home-gathered birds,
The tall gaunt shadows and the mellow light,
The tired leaves that fold against the tree ;
Within the heart unutterable words,
The pure compassion of the toward night—
A day that dies and never more shall be.

THE GATES OF LIFE

HELD in the bosom of night, large to the limits of wonder,
Close where the reflux seas wrinkle the wandering sands,
Where, with a tenderness torn from the secrets of sorrow,
and under

The pale pure spaces of night felt like ineffable hands,
The weak strange pressure of winds moved with the moving
of waters,

Vast with their solitude, sad with their silences, strange
with their sound,

Comes like a sigh from the sleep of the realmless Olympian
daughters,

Widowed of worship by time, at the feet of their father
uncrowned.

Held in the bosom of night, with the wind in my face, and
the ocean

Stirred thro' its tremulous deeps with the unfulfilled dawning
of moon,

THE GATES OF LIFE

As involved in the power of life and ashake with the pulse
of emotion

It waited, when slow thro' the void came the primitive
promise of noon.

Filled with the open avowals of nature, the choral that
falters

Only to swell thro' the channels of song like an affluent
stream,

Pure with old faiths of the heart that have died in the
horns of their altars,

Leaving their beauty to live like the memories kept of a
dream.

Like the fragments of immanent silence, like the dew of
immense resurrection

Falls the night on mine eyes, in the curve of my lips the
fresh tears of the sea,

And like rifts in the texture of life, like the soul in empiric
reflection,

THE GATES OF LIFE

Come the tacit and lingering lapses where the phantoms of
Heaven are free.

There is peace in the winds, the invisible pinions of dark,
there is patience enduring

In the native and motionless outlines of headland and forest and stone,

There is love in the perfumes essential of earth, the old
impulse maturing

To fruitage, and calm in the star-scattered chasms where
night is alone.

I am drenched with the night, I am drunk with the wine
she prepares for the spirit,

I am bathed in her solitudes, filled with her proper immensities, mad

With the perilous visions of realms that my soul, is it
strong, may inherit,

With the simple and adequate bounty of natural things :—
I am sad

THE GATES OF LIFE

With the solemn completeness of joy that abides in the
centres of sorrow,

The sadness of life understood in its prophecy, loved in its
pain,

I am alien to yesterday, held on the heart-beat of time,
tho' to-morrow

Return and its temperance fall on my zenith like colourless
rain.

I am urged with the germinal ichor whose functional vigour
increases,

Subsides and suspires and fashions the world to its purpose
again—

For the sands shall be fluent with sea when life's tremulous
episode ceases,

And winds from the regions of sunset blow warm with the
perfume of rain.

The darkness shall furnish its delicate silence, the destitute
spaces

THE GATES OF LIFE

August with disseminate suns shall be heritage still for the
soul,

And old memories warm from the heart shall inhabit
earth's intimate places,

When the cool, kind fingers of death loose our bonds and
we leap to the goal.

Tho' life shall return to me, sadden me cinctured with
sin and besotten

With heartless immoderate voices, and stale with perversion
of truth,

I have tasted the lips of the night, the caress of its wind,
and forgotten,

Alone on the bosom of nature, the days that shall wither
my youth ;

I have felt with the manifold ocean, with the blind, blank,
lustreless shining

Of starlight, and tasted intensely the crude cold smells of
the earth,

THE GATES OF LIFE

I have put my weak hands in the large hands of nature
that caught me declining
Thro' colourless ashes of thought in the fear of perpetual
birth.

She found me and nourished me, nourished mine eyes that
were thirsty for shadow,
My heart that desired her blindly, my senses diseased in
the rife,
Blurred phases of mortal desire, my soul that replied to
her sad, slow
Power, her promise of ultimate peace thro' the strength of
her life ;
Her life that is lost in its bigness and big with the prim-
itive glories,
Can it save from the life that is cramped in the dust-stifled
highways of men,
Can it open the gates of the soul where the vital com-
mencement and core is,
And the soul leave the centres of life and be merged into
' nothing again ?

THE GATES OF LIFE

Can life save from itself? Oh, Beloved! thine eyes overcome me, and longer

Than flesh can endure is the kiss on the dew of thy lips
and the flame,

And the old safe landmarks of life are lost in its volume,
while stronger

It widens till sorrow and happiness, virtue and sin, are the
same!

For love is coeval with life and what were divided are one,
now,

As we leap in the night, as we plunge in the well-spring of
nature, and then

The world grows coherent with music—Oh, haste! shall
our Heaven be won now,

And the manna of earth changed to food for the ultimate
soul-wants of men?

Shall life turn to death in the living? Shall we pass from
the heart-shaken centres

Of nature, the pinnacled crisis and powerful matrix of life,

THE GATES OF LIFE

That project thro' the cosmical fabric, where the sea-
meadows pulse, where the scent stirs

In flowers that feed the faint breezes, the eternal progenital
strife ?

Can we pass to the perfect cessation where life is a dream
unrecurring?—

Earth's divisionless ecstasy fills me, till my body is rent
with the strain,—

Oh, Heart !—could the flesh but endure the full splendour
of life and enduring

Dissolve in the quiet perfection of death, without hope,
without pain !

MOTHERS OF MEN

WEEP, mothers of men !

Out of pain ye have peopled the earth,
And the pain of life is the pain of birth,
With its sordid lust and its evil mirth,
And yet ye have borne and must bear again—
Weep, mothers of men !

Weep, mothers of men !

The toil of body and ache of brain,
The sweat of life at the end proves vain ;
Your children leave you to dare the strain,
Your children return to you alien—
Weep, mothers of men !

MOTHERS OF MEN

Weep, mothers of men !

The hands of the world are strong to take
The lives ye bear for the world's sole sake,
To try their souls till they bend or break :
Your children vanish from out your ken—
Weep, mothers of men !

Weep, mothers of men !

For a woman's lips, for the lust of gold,
Your children's honour is bought and sold,
Your children die in the dark and cold,
Your children never shall come again—
Weep, mothers of men !

Weep, mothers of men !

The human heart is the proper sheath
For the dagger of life ; ye have blown the breath
Of life in the world and it ends in death ;
Your children live and die, and then ?—
Weep, mothers of men !

MOTHERS OF MEN

Weep, mothers of men !

Weep and pray to the God whose scorn
Has given ye life that men may be born :
Hearts to suffer and eyes to mourn,
For the crown of love is a crown of thorn,
And your children return to you alien,
Perish and never return again—
Weep, mothers of men !

LOVE IN AGE

It was never more than a face,
An impression merely ; a bit
Of failing landscape—her grace
Just caught as the rain-cloud split
And the air grew warm a space.

And now it is many years,
And I, with my thin hair gray,
Face wrinkled—perhaps by tears !—
'Tis strange how my yesterday
Of dead youth reappears.

I wonder if after all
I've any right to complain !
As the shadows weave on the wall,
And we feel the wash of rain
Through the light grown thin and small ;

LOVE IN AGE

As we sit and cherish the hearth,
While the dead come one by one
And mime their long-quenched mirth,
I feel I have grown alone
And cold on a living earth.

Well, one of the dear mute things
That climb up out of the dark
Is this face, this moment that clings
To life and me, like a spark
That all the dead sunlight flings.

Just rain-starred, blowing grass,
The scent of the fluent air,
Her profile—eyes like glass
That kept a jewel, hair
All mystery—I thought to pass

And she turned—one look to me
Carelessly, then away

LOVE IN AGE

Out over the flat gray sea
Where the white squall fled away
And the light broke scatteredly.

And then I knew that her face
Was all in my blood ; half-blind,
I paused, eyes closed, a space—
And after?—naught but wind
And the clouds blown fine as lace.

And there—the story's told ;
And hardly worth, you'll say—
Perhaps to yourself: " He's old
And wanders "—yet far away
I know that the days were gold
As the past says " I shall repay."

And the memory, three parts grief,
Is exquisite and real
With a joy unlived ; but chief,

LOVE IN AGE

As the warm drops heartward steal,
With a present strange belief

That all we have been and done
And lived and suffered and loved
Come back as we sit alone
In the old years, sure and proved,
And give us the crown we won.

And say, "The living was worth;
The little laugh, much tears,
The fight ye fought on earth,
All come in the latter years
More real in a richer birth."

Ah! there's the old, old pain—
I stand in the sultry air
And think I see again,
Dimly, her wind-blown hair
Through the drift of seaward rain.

A MEMORY

“Quel labbro, ond’ alto
Par, come d’urna piena,
Traboccare il piacer.”
—LEOPARDI.

I REMEMBER but half-aright,
Through the wine, a cloud of hair,
And her breast’s dishevelled white ;
While a perfume touched the air,
And her eyes grew cold with light.

I remember the colour’s play
In the carmine wine, and round
The hush of an infant day
The viol’s silver sound
Burn up and sob away.

A MEMORY

Behold she comes to me now
And I kiss her naked hand,
For her sin of the lips and brow
And love—I can understand
And praise for the good I know.

Your virtue is sterile as drouth
And vain as your chilly words :
This woman is all my youth
Of wine, and the clash of swords,
And a kiss on the open mouth.

So give me her lips again,
For I care not if heaven condemn,
I have set on the brows of pain
Her desire for diadem—
And life has been so much gain !

AGE

ART thou not cold ?

Brother, alone to-night on God's great earth ;

Art thou not cold ?

In years of old

The simple, tender, rude,

Strong love of men was thine, the fire-bright hearth

Where now is silence of long solitude.

Art thou not old ?

Withered and white in these uncounted days ;

Art thou not old ?

Thy tale is told,

And quite forgot as thou,

To whom the world flung out a moment's praise,

Then tore the laurel from thy bleeding brow.

AGE

Art thou not sad?

Dost thou not feel the welling of great tears?

Art thou not sad?

How grave and glad

They rest, the quiet dead;

And thou—how dost thou live in these dim years?—

Thy heart has begged from God and starved for bread.

Shalt thou not die,

Brother? the chill is fearful on thy life.

Shalt thou not die?

Is this a lie,

This threadbare hope—of death?

A lie like God, and human love, and strife

For pride and fame—this soiled and withered wreath?

Art thou not cold?

Brother, alone on God's great earth to-night;

Art thou not cold?

AGE

Art thou not old

And dying and forlorn?

Art thou not choking in the last stern fight

While in divine indifference glows the morn?

EVENING

THE strangled breath
Of life and death
Fails to a lost complaint and dies,
And softer than sleep a tawny light
Furrows with fire the dawn of night
As the moon swells soft o'er the ocean's white
Like love through the desert centuries.

And the long-linked years
Bring their large arrears
Of sorrow and passion and great surmise,
And I know with a sense of familiar pain
That the dead hopes never can come again,
That the lust and struggle and tears are vain,
While ever the future smiles and lies.

TO A WOMAN

How shall it seem to thee when thou art old?

When this, the dust in which I wrote my name,
And I in memory's twilight lost and cold
Have grown too unremembered to defame?

Perchance that when thine eyes are dull with drouth,
Thy beauty haggard, thou shalt think on me
And cry, "His name is ashes in the mouth!
His name I speak in dying misery."

Perchance thy rage shall sob its full despair :
"He was more masterful than Time and fell,
Weak in the world, to lie despised and bare—
In death a chord, in life a broken bell."

TO A WOMAN

Or shall thy pride be mightier and say :

“ He fought and failed and—Peace ! the scorn was best!
With his forgotten deeds the years are gray,
And now his brow I crowned is fallen to rest.”

My heart instructs me it shall seem to thee

In no such wise; thy lips may praise or blame
And leave the heart its loving—thou to me,
Thy cheek that withers, my forgotten name.

THE END

Il sempre sospirar nulla rileva.

—IL PETRARCA.

I SAID, " Since Life is old with pain,
Since words are cold and tears are dead,
And nothing now is left unsaid,
And all the strain of thought is vain ;

" Since joy by joy the dreadful past
Is paid in agony of soul,
Since held in life's severe control,
Our shaken hearts are mute at last

" Since echoless and unrevealed,
Beyond, the sad impending days
Shall take us both in several ways,
Thro' worlds of windy rain concealed .

THE END

“ Since we have stood alone and proud
And paid for every joy in full,
And living touched the flames of Hell
And given life the tears we owed :

“ We who have felt the wild lament,
The voids of darkness, cold and pain,
That base the life we hold in vain,
That vainly come is vainly spent,

“ May watch alone the myriads pass
Their low and level twilight way,
Where never falls the splendid sway
Of primal truth that is and was.

“ The balance only lifts to fall,
The hemlock almost seems divine
To us, whose lips have touched the wine
That makes God's lips grow musical.

THE END

“ And they, who neither know nor feel,
Are strange to us nor understand—
I lay my lips upon thy hand
And joy and pain grow tense as steel.”

NÉANT

“ Et toi, divine Mort, où tout rentre et s'efface,
Accueille tes enfants dans ton sein étoilé ;
Affranchis-nous du temps, du nombre et de l'espace,
Et rends nous le repos que la vie a troublée ! ”

—LECONTE DE LISLE.

I TELL you this—each lapse of light
That glares the world from roof to floor,
Shall leave, as days that died before,
This envelope of antient night.

O Heart ! this wash of fluent air,
The ocean's calm sonorous stir,
That floods the huge horizon's blur,
Dissolves in silence, like a prayer

NÉANT

That threads the still cathedral's peace,
A rhythmic pathway thro' the grave,
Eternal twilight of the nave,
Whose silences shall never cease.

The fret of youth, the sword and wreath,
The flush of fame, the vernal smart,
The human tears that flood the heart
Are sparkles on the void of death.

For every life returns to this—
We are and are not, one by one,
As zones and systems, sun by sun,
Burn out—the darkness ever is.

Yea, life and light, the sea and star,
Upon the warp of things sublime,
Seem only—Never touched by time
Old night and death and silence are.

YOUTH

If I must die,
The earth is inarticulate to sing
The dirge I crave :
The sorrow of the murmur-laden wave,
The sea-born wind complaining 'neath the sky,
And round my head the waters' silver ring.

If I must live,
And feel the ashes of oblivion
About my soul,
Let life be fearful, let me feel the whole,
Despair, and face the sunrise—if I grieve
Let it but be the tarrying of the sun.

SERENADE

SLEEP ! for the silver dawn is folded still

Within the sea ;

Sleep ! for the trees are slumberous on the hill,

The lark is tuneless and the crickets thrill—

To wake is misery.

Sleep ! for the heart of God has slept to dream

A better world ;

Sleep ! for the day is sadder than we deem :

Perchance thy soul shall lapse along the stream

The lotus flower impearled.

Sleep ! Oh, my Love, for I am open-eyed

Upon the sun ;

Sleep ! for I would the heavens were yet more wide,

The stars more limpid, and that I had died

Ere yet the night was done.

SONG

My Love, thine eyes have been to me
Like to a bird that singeth in the night
To one who waits the coming of the light
Through the enormous solitude of sea.

Thy beauty fell upon my mind
Like song to one within a darkling land
Who, with fear on him like a bloodless hand,
Hears the large, hurrying whisper of the wind.

My Love, thy heart is like a prayer
To one who, dying at the gates of morn,
Stirless, in splendid effort and great scorn,
Sends forth his soul to meet the last despair.

SONG

And oh, thy Love is as a road
To one who waits in deserts of the soul,
And sees through Life, whose waves of fever roll,
The waking Sorrow in the breast of God.

SONG

OUT of one heart the birds and I together,
Earth hushed in twilight,
Low through the live-oaks hung heavy with silver,
Gemmed with the sky-light,
Under the great wet star
Shaking with light, we jar
Lute-voiced the silence with intervalled music.

While under the margined world the slow sun lingers,
Flaming earth's portal,
Over the lilac dusk spreads his great fingers—
Earth is immortal !
While the frail beauty dies,
Dream in the dreamer's eyes,
All the good gladness turns praise for the singers.

SONG

Hark, 'tis the breath of life ! Hush ! and I need it ;

Northern, gigantic,—

Questing the silences, herding the sudden foam

Down the Atlantic ;

Leaves from the autumn's store

Shrill at my desert door,

They and I out of one heart that is grieving.

“ Or poserei per sempre,
Stanco mio cor.” —LEOPARDI.

SILENT, alone ! Around the wrinkled earth
My lips can feel the final heart-throb creep,
While autumn fills the world with solemn mirth
That freights the vine and gilds the ripened sheaves
That summer promised ; and upon my sleep
The guardian oak shall drop its pride of leaves.

Silent, alone ! Beneath the sleepless stars
This cloven peak shall stand against the moon
In windy solitude, the whispered wars
Of waters writhed in silver at my feet
Shall hush the verges of the world and croon
A sure compassion for my sure defeat.

Silent, alone ! The river seeks the sea,
The dew-drop on the rose desires its sun !
Oh, prisoned Soul, shalt thou alone be free ?
Shalt thou escape the curse of death and birth
And merge thy sorrows in oblivion ?
Thou, thou alone of all the living earth ?

Silent, alone ! I know when next the dawn
Shall cast its vision through the desert sea
And find me not, the sword that I have drawn
Shall flash between the twilights, and a word
Shall praise what I was not but strove to be,
Saying : “ Behold the mercy of the Lord.”

THEY

“ Oh sprich mir nicht von jener bunten Menge,
Bei deren Anblick uns der Geist entflieht ! ”

—GOETHE.

THEIR voices die and calmly leave
This interlude of running rain,
This solitude of heart and brain,
This solemn pause and brief reprieve.

And as their voices they shall die,
Dim darkened spirits dulled with sound ;
The truth they never sought nor found
Shall give their little lives the lie.

They live for life, their needs are filled,
And in their false and narrow scope
They mock at dream and jeer at hope ;
Their foolish noise shall soon be stilled.

THEY

They live and laugh and cease to be,
They fade and fall and rise again,
Their scorn is false, their praise is vain,
They live and die unceasingly.

They are as writings on the snow,
That pass and leave no trace behind;
They mocked the sun, for they were blind,
The Truth, because they could not know.

Have patience ! Yet a little while,
Thou, too, shalt pass beyond their ken ;
The stupid scorn of vulgar men
May madden, but cannot defile.

If on the fire-forged nether springs
Thy hands shall base the work they do,
What matter if the pure and true
Be bought and sold for meaner things ?

THEY

For if thro' thee, whate'er the cost,
Pure light may shine in word or deed,
Thy work shall live ; thou art the seed
Of what can never quite be lost.

So take no heed of all the loud,
Persistent folly, scorn and sin,
But, where the light has entered in,
Look steadfast, unafraid and proud.

They pass like winds that chafe the sea—
Strive on unvexed with fear or hate,
For calm abides and consummate
The Peace that was, is and shall be.

TO A BUST OF THE MATER DOLOROSA

“ . . . et sur nos croix d'ébène
Ton cadavre céleste en poussière est tombé ! ”

—DE MUSSET.

OH, Dolorous Mother with the silver tears,
That in the withered day of Jesus' pain
Received the flame of heaven-inspired prayers
Upon thy pale, ascetic lips in vain !

Thou, Israel's daughter, with white arms apart
On Death's dishevelled midnight, felt despair
Weep tears of blood upon thy broken heart
And tears of silver through thy solemn hair.

In vain thine agony grew almost sweet
With pity at His death, and vainly there
The Magdalen lavished on His wounded feet
Her lips' caress, her opulence of hair.

TO A BUST OF THE MATER DOLOROSA

In vain thy Son raised Lazarus from the dust,

In vain He brake the bread and shared the wine,

In vain they wore His sign, the meek and just,

In vain He was a symbol and a shrine !

In vain ! Thine image crumbles and is gone,

Thine hallowed altar is an empty sign,

And these mine unbelieving lips are stone

That kiss thy dust amid those tears of thine !

TO PSYCHE

FORESPENT I sat at the morning's gate

And Psyche beside with drooping wings,

And I moaned, "We have come in a world of hate

Where the song-bird songless wings."

And she : "Thou hast lived in the fierce hot light

Till thy mind is gray with remembered things,

But between the stars the air is bright

With a song no singer sings.

"I have waited ; mine eyes are liquid for thee,

For thou who wert lost in the elder years ;

I have come, and thy passions throbbing sea

Is salt with tears.

TO PSYCHE

“ Too long have we dwelt apart, alone,
I in the shadow, thou in the sun ;
Oh, bare thy breast that I build my throne,
For the storm is run.

“ Through the violet lustre of my hair
Let a sleep steal over my golden eyes
And I shall forget the tireless air
And the cruel skies.

“ Sleep, sleep, and never to wake again,
But ever to lapse from dream to dream
And taste the joy that is near to pain,
Where the worlds not are but seem.

“ I am thy soul, God's child am I,
And the day when thy mighty mind turns small
In the simple nearness of the sky,
I shall wake and hear thee call.

TO PSYCHE

“ Mine eyes shall unfold in a world of morn,
Through the gates of night by music blown
We shall watch dissolve the world's great scorn—
On the breast of God, alone.”

THE WILL

“Was jeder im innersten WILL, das muss er sein und was jeder ist, das WILL er eben.”—SCHOPENHAUER.

It sprang from the brows of a star
And it lives with the life of the world,
It appeared like the lightning of God
Through the dust of Eternity hurled.

And much as a luminous thought
May shine through the dusk of a dream,
It awoke in the childhood of light
And crimsoned the twilight with gleam.

It arose in the first blade of grass
That brake the stone mountains apart,
And it budded and blossomed and bloomed
Till it stirred in the human heart.

THE WILL

And the centuries freighted with life
Have trembled at touch of its flame,
And lips where its lyric was warm
Have laboured to give it a name.

It inspires the voices of birds,
The dædalian tremor of earth,
When the passion of increate spring
Moves the heart to ineffable mirth.

It suspires in scent from the rose
And in midsummer's satiate rest ;
It is rich through the veins of the world,
Like milk in a woman's deep breast.

It burdens thy murmurous lips
When love in thy spirit is warm—
My lover the sea, it is thou
As it thrones in thy splendour of storm.

THE WILL

'Tis the pride of the arm and the loin
That thrives in the sinews of war,
And puts forth in the whiteness of death
Like life in the dawn of a star.

And though life is grown tired and old,
And the treasures of heart and of soul
Are sold for a handful of coin,
It stirs with a vital control

In man and in woman and earth,
As on Sappho's lips haunted with flame,
Or as under the hand of the Christ
It burned—it is ever the same.

And while ever the sunrise returns
It shall still be the power that can
Make the heart to grow pallid with love
Or a man die the death of a man.

TUCKANUCK

I

I AM content to live the patient day :

The wind sea-laden loiters to the land

And on the glittering gold of naked sand

The eternity of blue sea pales to spray.

In such a world we have no need to pray ;

The holy voices of the sea and air

Are sacramental, like a mighty prayer

In which the earth has dreamed its tears away.

We row across the waters' fluent gold

And age seems blessed, for the world is old.

Softly we take from Nature's open palm

The dower of the sunset and the sky,

And dream an Eastern dream, starred by the cry

Of sea-birds homing through the mighty calm.

TUCKANUCK

II

Thou art the dwelling of unshadowed sun
That spills its metal on the furrowed tide
And vivid grasses when the winds have died
In threads of murmur round the noontide spun.
The cerements of flesh are like a rose
Caressed with light, whose petals, one by one
Unfolding, loose the soul to die upon
The ocean of the air that ebbs and flows.
Perchance the truth is nearer than we deem,
That after grievous pilgrimage and dearth
The soul shall wake and find it close beside ;
And see, as visioned in a perfect dream,
The pitiful grave spirit of the earth,
A patient presence sitting at God's side.

TUCKANUCK

III

I know it never shall come again,

 This present peace of the great grave sea
And the land that laughs in its sheen of rain,

 This friendship of nature to you and me,
While Autumn smiles on us, big and sane.

It never shall come though our love abide,

 And this very whisper stirs the grass,
While clear and far on the tortured tide

 As now, the sea-birds cry and pass
In years that shall come when our day has died.

It never shall come—must we praise or blame

 If every day moulds the world anew?
Better perhaps, but never the same ;

 If this that we cherish and hold for true
Shall wither and fade to an empty name?

TUCKANUCK

'Tis the woe o' the world ! As the moments fly
I war with time in a great despair,
While the first shy star in the purple sky
Steals through the dead day's golden hair
That I love so much though it comes to die.

IV

WIND OF TWILIGHT

“ Cuando besa á la pradera
La brisa que entre las ramas
Pasa con voz lastimera.”

—M. GARCIA MEROU.

GONE the red reaches of repining sea,
Thou, thro' forgotten twilights, and thy pain,
Wind of immortal longing, fresh as rain,
Wonderful, fresh and faint, O mystery!
Give me again the languorous touch of thee
Lost in the purple shadows, while the main,
Intervalled, lifts its choral, and again
Sorrow divine and calm thro' thee to me.
Give me the steady silence : sea, sky, shore,
Earth and her simple idylls!—All is gone !
All shall return, but be the same no more.
Give me, O wonder ! still thy dim dark kiss,
Cool on my temples, while I bide alone
And cling to youth and linger pale for this.

PASTORAL

SLOPES of the sun and vine, and thou dark stream,
Thou minstrel of the forest-gloom, whose roll
Is like the passing of a natural dream
Through depths of patient sleep
To lend endurance to the taxèd soul.
The cruel life beneath the cruel noon,
Where men are quenched like dewdrops in the sun,
Where haggard women reach to God and weep,
Never corrodes thy silent solitude ;
But where thy sheer, green shadows shoreward creep
Through the slow afternoon,
The battle lost, the poem half-begun,
Are chaplets that the hymning dawn-stars keep
To grace the splendid hope our youth imbued.

PASTORAL

The twilight flowers close

And down the shadow falls a timid star;

Afar

The sigh and silence of a changing wind,

The perfume of a dying rose—

Beyond the senses and beyond the mind

Dimly we hear a graver music grow,—

Peace! Peace! the world is tuneful of her woes :

With man's despair the richer chord impearled

Is infinite of grief; we in the world

Hear scattered discord, nor the broad full flow

Of song until, waxed greater than the whole,

Wide, from their slumber's mystery, uncloze

The vision-laden eyelids of the soul.

FALL

NAY, be content—our door that opens wide

On whitened fields this autumn dawn, all furred

With silver imagery, the sudden bird

That soothes the crystal air, the windless tide

Of light across the world from roof to floor—

Thy heart can ask no more.

The fringed horizon of the pines

Is delicate with frore,

And holds our world within its shadow shore,

Our world where beauty fresh with dewy wines

Sits naked at our door.

Thine eyes in mine ! The vineyard's dusky bloom,

The garnered grain, are gifts of autumn's mirth ;

And now, while softly through the forest gloom

The warm awakening of the good wet earth

FALL

Suspires through the dawn, we need not fear
The ceaseless pageantry of death and birth,
The swallow's passing with the changing year.
Our souls could say, "Perfection was and is ;
Death comes like slumber,"—if to-morrow's sun
Should find us fallen with the summer's rose.
This moment stolen from the centuries,
This foretaste of the soul's oblivion
We hold and cherish, and because of this
Are life and death made perfect, and thy woes
Turn lyric through the glory we have won.
The morning flower that drew its petals close
And slept the cold night through is now unfurled
To catch the breathless moment ; big and sane
Our autumn day forsakes the gates of rose,
And like a lion shakes its golden mane
And leaps upon the world.

SONNETS

I

TO SILENCE

LORD of the deserts 'twixt a million spheres,
Child of the moon-dawn and the naked moon,
Close comrade of the whispered afternoon,
Angel of mercy, whose absolving tears
Erase the discord of our human fears :
Thy lap is freighted with the dawn, thy heart
Is warm about the sunset, for thou art
The woof and fabric of eternal years.
Thy hand is soft upon the troubled eyes,
And, in the palace of thy sister Sleep,
Thy peace remains when Life's last echo dies.
Thou art more tender than the raptured breath
That rounds a virgin's breast, and thou dost keep
Thy kiss to lay upon the brows of Death.

II

TO THE EARTH

THE heart can understand, oh, Mother Earth !

Thy tides and winds and seasons whisper, “ Fate
Has held us dumb through centuries of hate,
And tears, and blood for things of little worth.”

The heart can understand, since Lilith’s mirth
Shivered the early echoes, half in scorn,
The world-wide leap of light from every dawn,
Day’s dying pomp around thy blood-drenched girth.

Across thy theatre pageants come and pass :

The power and pride of man, a scenic thing,
Frames forth his glory in enduring brass ;

And through his dust I hear the whispering
Of lifted waters, and a blade of grass
Breaking the murmur-laden breast of Spring.

III

ESSEX

I

THY hills are kneeling in the tardy spring,
And wait, in supplication's gentleness,
The certain resurrection that shall bring
A robe of verdure for their nakedness.
Thy perfumed valleys where the twilights dwell,
Thy fields within the sunlight's living coil,
Now promise, while the veins of nature swell,
Eternal recompense to human toil.
And when the sunset's final shades depart
The aspiration to completed birth
Is sweet and silent ; as the soft tears start,
We know how wanton and how little worth
Are all the passions of our bleeding heart
That vex the awful patience of the earth.

V

ESSEX

II

THINE are the large winds and the splendid sun
Glutting the spread of heaven to the floor
Of waters rhythmic from far shore to shore,
And thine the stars, revealing one by one.
Thine the grave, lucent night's oblivion,
The tawny moon that waits below the skies,—
Strange as the dawn that smote their blistered eyes
Who watched from Calvary when the Deed was done.
And thine the good brown earth that bares its breast
To thy benign October, thine the trees
Lusty with fruitage in the late year's rest ;
And thine the men whose blood has glorified
Thy name with Liberty's divine decrees—
The men who loved thy soil and fought and died.

V

TOWARD thine Eastern window when the morn
Steals through the silver mesh of silent stars,
I come unlaurelled from the strenuous wars
Where men have fought and wept and died forlorn.
But here, across these early fields of corn,
The living silence dwelleth, and the gray
Sweet earth-mist, while afar the lisp of spray
Breathes from the ocean like a Triton's horn.
Open thy lattice, for the gage is won
For which this earth has journeyed through the dust
Of shattered systems, cold about the sun ;
And proved by sin, by mighty lives impearled,
A voice cries through the sunrise : " Time is just ! "—
And falls like dew God's pity on the world.

VI

FOG AT SEA

GRAY grisly tides that choke the master sun
Who domes the caves of sullen fog with pearl,
While round and still the sick white eddies swirl
Between the smothered vistas one by one;
Like ghosts the frail hysteric breezes run
Aslant the ashen world, and strive to furl
The slow drenched air in one enormous whirl
And free the ocean's breast it weighs upon.
The world is dying for a draught of air,
Great autumn air that like a hoarded stream
Floods the gigantic openness of dawn ;
And, like the whispering of hopeless prayer,
The white world's voices, as if drowsed with dream,
Sigh through the muffled stillness and are gone.

VII

NIRVANA

I

AND shall we find thee? Shall the tired soul
Toiling in gross dull clay, doomed to abide
In blurred oblivion, condemned to hide
Its eager wings impatient of control,
And God-lit eyes that yearn to view the whole
Of that divinest splendour glorified
In earth's rare visions—shall it feel the tide
Of thy calm love in endless pity roll?
Oh, let the inward vision drink the light
Of thine effulgent countenance! Then might
This immaterial dream of Thee and Me
Dissolve away like moon-mists in the morn,
And we could lapse in silence from the scorn
Of Destiny to thy great unity.

VIII

NIRVANA

II

WOOF of the scenic sense, large monotone
Where life's diverse inceptions, death and birth,
Where all the gaudy overflow of earth,
Merge—they the manifold and thou the One.
Increate, complete—when the stars are gone
In cinders down the void, when yesterday
No longer spurs desire starvation-gray,
When God grows mortal in men's hearts of stone,—
As each pulsation of the Heart Divine
Peoples the chaos, or with falling breath
Beggars creation, still the soul is thine !
And still untortured by the world's increase,
Thy wide, harmonic silences of death ;
And last—thy white uncovered breast of peace.

IX

PASSING DAYS

THEY walk across my life with great, grave eyes
That greet my questioning hands with silent scorn
And blossoms break upon their crowns of thorn,
While garlands wither that their children prize.
I kiss their lips and grow a little wise,
A little patient, while my strength is worn
Beneath the spur of each succeeding morn
That dowers its evening with a fresh surmise.
Their message dies with them, an empty word ;
But memory garners, in a wild regret,
Their silent beauty that the heart preferred.
And in the fire of hopeless love they seem
So real with sorrow, that I half forget
My soul shall wake and find the days a dream.

X

ON AN ÆOLIAN HARP

LURE of the night's dædalian sea-born breath,
Wild as the heart's uncomprehended dole,
Strange as the grieving of a mighty soul
Touched with the lyric woe of life and death.
Phraser of world-wide monotones that toll
Like far enormous bells from sky to sky,
Voice of the vaster solitudes that lie
With life's solution past the mind's control.
The golden eyes of long-forgotten days,
The dolorous memory of simple things,
Sadden thy lapsing chords :—the present pays
The past's arrears of sorrow, and they seem
To wake a sense, among thy weeping strings,
Of other lives, like some unceasing dream.

XI

THE SPHINX

OBLIVION like perfume from the wings
Of dim Osiris, and the calm of one
High soul, who thy remorseless lips of stone
Chiselled to mock the resonance of kings.
Thy proper silence, ripe with legend, clings
To thine inert omnipotence, endures
Though Gods and empires agonize, and lures
Strange lapses from life's echoing, brazen strings.
Thou seest new stars swing downward through the gloom,
While on her dust, who smiled and ravished Rome,
Decays the graven marble of her tomb.
The fruitful Nile, the desert in thine eyes—
Dead laughter, and dead tears—How much to come?—
Death, death, and fragile life that weeps and dies.

XII

WHILES were, I almost seemed to understand ;
I watched the flooding waters with their fleece
Of sudden foam, and felt the ripening peace
And joy of increase that the earth had planned.
Then the great shadow fell across the land,
And in the harsh monotony of wind
I felt the past like Death about my mind,
And mild with grief put forth mine idle hand.
There was the question : each day should I be
What yesterday I was not, and for me
Of my dead self but memory remain ?
And when upon my nakedness the snow
Had spread its silence, should I wake and know,
Or sleeping, dream another life as vain ?

XIII

TO THE MEMORY OF W. H. P.

LIFE may not perish though the winds of death
Whine shrilly through the world, where we alone
Crouch in the trodden dust, and feel the moan
Of ancient sorrow burthening our breath.
The blade endureth, though it break the sheath ;
Life springs and ceases in oblivion,
Gathered and scattered by the master sun
Like rain upon the waters calm beneath.
We wait like corpses in a charnel-house,
And singly, as the shrouded years return,
They loose the cere-cloth on our furrowed brows ;
And one departs in splendour through the tomb,
We hear the voice of Cherubim, and turn
Weeping like children in the intenser gloom.

XIV

INSOMNIA

To wake upon the shrouded budding sky
And sudden silence—wake and lie alone
In the gigantic solitude, and groan
To feel the sting of light upon the eye.
To wake and wait until the senses cry—
Knowing the sun shall smite upon the sea,
And rouse the tragic day that is to be,
Grief-haunted by the days that have gone by.
To wake, and wait, and lie alone, and know
That through the mist of grim familiar pain
The world is perfect music even now ;
To strive and catch the master-hand that pearled
The night with song, and feel, across the rain,
A sadness as the sadness of the world.

XV

I STOOD upon the old Earth's breast and gazed
To where the seaward sand was gray with brine,
And heard a song-bird weeping in a pine,
Beneath the iron heaven, bent and crazed.
The sea was like an eye that death had glazed ;
Amid gray light blown round the ragged marge
The fallen sun hung lustreless and large
And one thin trace of lifeless waters blazed.
I strove to feel God's pity for His men,
As, in the Galilean dawn, the love
Of Jesu widened on the human ken :—
In vain ! I watched my fated evening go
Heart-broken beyond tears and round me move
The strength and sorrow of the life I know.

XVI

OUR lips are laughing while our eyes are wet ;
The happiness we hope, the grief we fear,
The stress and anguish that our moments bear,
Are trivial shadows that our lives forget.
The day's despairing toil and passion's fret
Evanish utterly like empty words ;
What was has never been ; the past affords
Only a heritage of divine regret.
But whiles the sorrow of a sleeping face
Awakes a deeper pity not our own,
Or when the soul in Beauty's large embrace
Forsakes its margined slumber, we may grow
To greater moments, when we stand alone
And feel that life is sadder than we know.

XVII

THE GATE OF DREAMS

THE Gate of Dreams, where, time and time again,
Through sleep transfigured with a nameless light,
Fearful, upon the tired end of night,
I come as might a devote to his fane.

The Gate of Dreams, of melancholy pain,
Flooding the drowsy labyrinthine soul
With faces of despair or patient dole—
The tragic children of a weary brain.

The Gate of Dreams, where throbs a ghostly wail,
As it were of sobbing strings and wild accords,
Where life is scenic in the smile of fate ;
Where faces, shrouded in an iron veil,
Pass outward in a woe too great for words,
Or weep in haggard terror, weep and wait.

XVIII

TO GIACOMO LEOPARDI

DESPAIR is musical, the wings of pain
Are stirred in rhythm of large winds that bear
A mute divinity of human prayer
And human sorrow that the prayer is vain.
The tears of speech that wet thy lips profane
No Muse with discord, for the world's control
Had never blurred the windows of thy soul
Nor bound the beating of thy heart with chain.
But we have piled the gates of sun with dust,
And in the jangling darkness of the earth,
With muffled hearts, exist because we must.
Our times are blasphemous : no tears, no shame,
But heaven insulted with an evil mirth
And greed exalted with a sacred name.

XIX

To J. T. S.

After reading "Amis et Amile."

AND were they friends as thou and I are friends
That take the wind of sorrow open-eyed,
And, striving sunward though the storms divide,
Stand, speak and break amid the press that bends?
We ache to life and bear the dower it sends
Of Godless temples and of rusted sword,
With ashes of the heart the heavens scored,
Arched o'er a world unholy in its ends.
Was their love more than ours, being impearled
With sacrifice of blood and wife and child?
Ah! they, who walked the sunshine of the world
And heard grave angels speaking through a dream,
Had never their unlaurelled brows defiled,
Nor strove to stem the world's enormous stream.

XX

TO THE CHILDREN OF THE MUSE

“Nel secol tetro e in questo aer nefando.”

—L.

NONE shall put forth a hand and twist the brass
That galls the neck of Liberty, none dare
Avert the iron stigma of despair
And show our eyes how good the battle was.
Yet now for you who, 'mid the blowing grass
That hides the grave of honour, sit and stare
In the great muteness of forgotten prayer—
The vengeance of the Lord has come to pass !
They fester in their cities who have scarred
The face of earth until her skeleton
Is naked, and her breasts are dry and hard ;
Say, shall ye tear the world's dishevelled robe
And lay her ulcers open to the sun,
Or murmur soft, “ Thy will be done ! ” like Job ?

XXI

L'ENFANT DU SIÈCLE

DIM dying child be still and taste thy pain,
 Poor hands be mild, for no new God appears,
 And patient on thy pinnacle of years,
 Dark soul forego thy Godlike task and chain
Thy longings; Faith has died and they are vain,
 And thou hast lost the power of natural tears,
 And memories that thy dateless childhood bears
 Have blurred thy living days like sterile rain.
The soul's sweet choristers that once did toll
 Thro' God's immensity are fallen dumb;
 As when the accorded harps and martial drum,
Thro' some vast palace where a kingly soul
 Has passed away, are hushed; and thou shalt come
 Thro' life a mourner, mute and pitiful.

XXII

AUX MODERNES

“ Dispera
L'ultima volta.”

—LEOPARDI.

I

ONLY an empty platitude for God,
Only for poetry a jangling nerve,
Only for life the baser lusts to serve,
Only a fashion where the function stood.
Only a shadow stealing span on span
Over the unmeasured whiteness of the soul ;
Darkness around the God-established goal
That blazed before the innocence of man.
And when the flame of adolescence breaks
On some wild heart the world has overthrown,
He stares as one who waits alone and wakes,
Cheated of love and faith, his vision drawn
Haggard and hopeless from his death-bed down
The hard, gray, tacit distances of dawn.

XXIII

AUX MODERNES

II

WHEN I have learned the accents of your speech,
The splendid grief of silence ; when I know
Your acrid laughter and your tearless woe,
And learn the shame of life—what you can teach ;
When dust returns to dust, and mutely each
Grows haggard thro' the fard—then I shall say,
“ Your foolish lips have lied from day to day,
And life has reached the goal that life must reach.”
And then a hush—and then a mighty thought
Shall move upon the fabric of your lives
As thro' a tavern window looms the dawn ;
And in your tarnished tinsel, in the scorn
Of guttered candles, all your lives have sought
And you shall fade and finish—Truth survives !

XXIV

OF this that I have written none is mine,
Save only as my clouded sense has heard
And blurred with ineffectual rhyme the Word
Whose virgin silence was and is divine.
The veins of God are filled with golden wine
Perturbed with splendour, and this world we dream
Around our tinsel lives endows a theme
Of music—Hearken ! for its voice is thine !
The Youth and Beauty of the earlier earth
Have never died, but on the breast of song
They lie like flowers—'tis we that agonize !
And in the gray senescence of our birth
Erase the soul whose voice condemns the wrong,
And move our fingers through the dust we prize.

XXV

TO A STATUE

DEEP Soul that may not hold the brazen mould,
Spirit whose silence bideth to the moon,
Thou Goddess of the closing afternoon,
Who gazeth where the tidal air is cold—
Thine eyes have watched beyond the stars grown gold,
That polar silence where the shrouded spheres
Stir slightly through the mist of little years,
For thou wert never born, nor young, nor old.
Goddess without a shrine to bear the prayer
Of thy few faithful, whose despair has won
A mourning fillet for thy solemn hair:
The soul shall hear thee sigh beyond the cry
Of Time, and fallen headlong from the sun,
Shall find thy pity in the vaster sky.

XXVI

A DREAM

I DREAMED the world of noon was stricken blind :
A sun, so haggard that it starved the air,
Scarcely sufficed to light the stark despair
Of tearless millions shrieking to the wind.
Then, leering on the world, a hellish mind
Drawn in a hearse, raved silently of pain ;
The voices died and silence laid the strain
Of unforgotten anguish on mankind.
Upon their bones the flesh of men grew gray,
All nature withered in a wild regret,
And maddened whispers scared the ashy sun :
“ No more ” they moaned “ men’s hearts, like drops of spray,
Shall touch their ocean, mingle and forget—
This is the burial of oblivion ! ”

XXVII

“ELI! ELI! LAMA SABACTHANI!”

THE glare of Hell it was, the haggard light,
And tragic to His ears, from Galilee,
Like wailing children sobbed His native sea :
Then on the cruel nails He strained upright
With sinews drawn as steel, and cast His sight
Over the blackness, but He might not see—
Even He the Christ. He plucked against the tree
With piteous hands, and called across the night
Thrice upon God the Father—none replied !
The Heavens were void ; ecstatic voices cried,
“ Despair ! Despair ! in death ye may not die ! ”
He heard : the great sweat beaded on His face,
The vital sob urged outward, and a space
Rose through dissolving faith the Eternal Lie !

XXVIII

DANTE

THY voice—all its least tones, the strain and stir
Measured and ardent, and the mighty trend
Outward upon a light-pervaded end,
Gained through the fields of flame and hideous blur.
Thou art sonorous as the shuddering fir
Thwarting the tempest, nor thy metres bend
Under their splendid freight, when thou dost blend
Power and light and love to speak of Her.
Inward thy flame arose and strong with strife
Shone in thy words—thou art to me as life,
Beaten, renewed with hope, and undestroyed.
Thy voice comes pure to me as waters falling,
Swells till it seems I hear the Seraph calling
Through open spaces of the dayless void.

XXIX

LOVE

I

SADDER and more divine than human tears
Born on the eyes to utter what is dumb,
This simple silence when the heart grows numb
Among the dead desires of perished years.
Such silence quivers with the song it bears,
Unsung within a fabric of old pain,
Till in the dust of tired passions, plain
Through wreaths of light, the naked truth appears.
Then poised upon the moment thou canst lay
Thy brow upon the Heart of Hearts, and feel
The tide that ebbs and waxes through us all ;
Till from the silence, through the world's decay,
A voice shall speak to thee like beaten steel,
Lest on thy sea of sun the shadows fall.

XXX

II

It flows thro' all of time from heart to heart,
This solemn wonder fresh with naked strength,
This source of life where every mouth at length
Must drink and feel the old impulsions start.
It is the whole that moves through every part,
The aspiration dim of things unborn,
The prophecy of life's essential dawn,
That tears the everlasting night apart.
And we who are, and were the splendid spur
For wasted generations, we must bear
For human sake the same gigantic stir
Of breathless longing, and the great command
Of life to life, and leave our spirits bare
To feel the truth they cannot understand.

XXXI

I DREAMED of Thee, O Wonder, with the sheen
Amid thy temples of a sanguine gem,
And warm, between thy garment's purple hem,
The languid passions of that Persian Queen
Who sate with she-slaves in her quiet gloom,
And felt the sob of fountains and the keen
Perfume of lotus, and the murmurous lean
Of windy flowers, and life's impending doom.
O dream of dazzled senses and the pain
Of conscious happiness! I woke beneath
The dark maturing dawn, while earth again
Renewed its patient toil for human sake,
And felt the tender calm of such a death
As thine, O Wonder, dream whose death it was to
wake.

XXXII

SHE came once only in a dream of death
And touched my face with wise, unhurried hand,
And “Man,” her silence said, “I understand—
The end is now, and quiet now, and faith.’
And lotos-like and moved with tender breath,
Her breast was calm as night and pale and bare,
And, watching thro’ the gloom of burnished hair,
Her solemn eyes were deep, and tears beneath.
And tears were on the lips that kissed her mouth,
And only tears could speak to her, and tears
Fell burning on her breast—the tears of youth.
And life, and evermore its weariness
Was dim forgotten pain, the iterate years
Were ceased, the roar of time was echoless.

XXXIII

THE low moon quivers on the hyacinth sky,
And lays upon the ocean's glooming frown
Its frail caress ; like silence tenderly
The shadow falls immeasurably down.
A smouldering flame perturbs the heaven's girth,
As might, in some great moment, silently,
A sudden vision of the tragic earth
Blazon the brows of God with mystery.
And thou shalt come as the great shadow falls,
Like the slow single star, and lay thy last
Ethereal kiss upon my tired eyes ;
And I shall answer thee as one who calls
Through the dumb places of the haunted past,
Drinking its fulness ere the moment dies.

XXXIV

TELL me again, and then lift up to me

Those frail white arms of thine and touch my face,
And wrap me wholly in thine eyes' embrace,
Till God's sure hand run fire round me and thee.

Tell me again, and let thy speaking be

A faint phrased echo, delicate as lace,
Of seas sonorous through the void of space,
The low, lost rhythm of immensity.

Tell me again, and where thy breasts divide

Pillow my weariness—the breath of fall
Shall blow crisp crimson leaves upon thy hair ;

Thy presence is as where a song has died,

And left its memory grieving over all
This vital solitude of autumn air.

XXXV

GIVE me thy pitiful, soft-moulded hand,
And we will bide in silence, Thou and I ;
Within the choired poem of the sky
Thine is the voice I cannot understand.
Give me thy hand and let the heart command :
My mind is blurred, and yet I seem to know
Darkly what men have spoken of, and now
The Word itself their lips have never spanned,
Nor I shall ever speak it, nor shall they
That illustrate to-morrow with their birth ;
The tongue is tethered—we can just obey ;
And from the gates of sunrise issue dumb,
Illumined—while the spirit of the earth
Reveals her secret, knowing we have come.

XXXVI

If I have touched thy heart, as Solomon,
When seemed the world dissolving in a kiss,
Upon the pages wonder-white with prayer
With lyric fingers laid his rose of song ;
And if the most I am is just—a man,
Why yet, Belovèd, in that I am thine,
I must not ask forgiveness ; this I write
Is all and more than I can say I am ;
Like veiled music through the threadbare words
Thy heart is beating even now, for I
Have seen the morning quicken through its sleep
In cycles of dim song. Thou canst not say
What I have given is deserving scorn,
For I have naught to give that is not Thine.

XXXVII

TOO SOON

HIS wordless voice was like a toiling dream ;
I waited, stupid in my wasted hope,
And felt the winds, beneath the heavens cope,
Stir like the pulse of some vast gradual stream.
This was the end. I heard again his scream
Of perfect fear, and felt about me furled
The naked hate of all the living world :—
God's eyes looked into mine nor were supreme !
The crawling fear had thrust his jaws apart
And fixed his lidless eyes against the wall,
And Death held back the tides within his heart ;
I cried " For Pity, tell me if she lied ! "
Then came the hideous simper, and a small
Mute whisper writhed upon his lips and died.

XXXVIII

TOO LATE

WHILE over all the sullen embers gloat,
Silence, forgetfulness, and only now
The twilight of your hair across my brow,
And soft my kiss upon your marble throat.
Be still—great visions through the quiet float,
And while the wind is wailing at our door,
And day retires in gloom across the moor,
Time shall forget an hour and grow remote
And—Hush ! The fire is dull between your hair:
My tear upon your breast your curtained eyes
Have answered—it is all the heart can bear !
Peace ! Peace ! there's pity in the soul of pain,
And now our lives fulfil their destinies—
Hark ! the despairing whisper of the rain.

XXXIX

THE NIGHT-WIND

ECHOLESS voice of few sufficing chords,
Soft as the memory of a vaster rest,
Secret as sorrow held within the breast
Of one whose silence never stoops to words.
Harp of waste waters by thy hands caressed,
Chalice of music—prayer and song and strife—
Filled with that wine that drowns the ills of life
When the last vineyards of the soul are pressed.
Prophet of final calm where life shall cease,
Cease and a kind forgetfulness of soul
Fall like a balm upon the wounds of peace—
Thy voice shall soothe the last and sternest fight,
Threading the dark dim solitudes of night,
Like life without a prelude or a goal.

XL

AND they shall say to thee, " He died distraught ;
His mind was crazed by dreaming on things past,
And so he grew in madness till the last
Sheer height of scorn he tottered from to naught.
His hands were weak and idle and ne'er caught
With strength of purpose at the busy world ;
Forlorn and proud he stood—Time onward whirled
And left the ruins of the things he sought."
But thou shalt understand what they despise,
Cherish what they reject, and count the few
Poor virtues dearer than the things they prize.
And weighing all the evil they have said,
Thy heart shall say, " What, then, if this be true?
Be Silent ! for he loved me and is dead."

A LAST WORD

THINE be the last thought and the best, and thine
These few, poor, fluttering words, and thine the whole
Of life, that in the quiet of the soul,
Stirs through the muteness of the Heart Divine.

And in its silence, overwrought with song,
Where, through the curtained chambers of the mind,
The soul of thought, in solitude enshrined,
Unutterable dwells, and pure and strong,

Thy royal heart shall cross the wide-eyed dawn
Alone, and find the unspoken thing I am
Waiting for none but thee behind the sham
Of rhyméd words where the poem's self is born.

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